

**RDI**

Initiatives

Helping Rural Communities Thrive*A Quarterly Publication of Rural Development Initiatives, Inc.**Spring 1995*

Pulling The Pieces Together

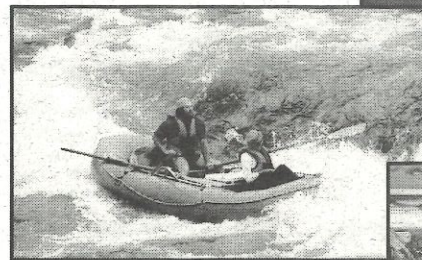
Small communities need to connect local planning efforts with existing regional strategies

Residents in rural areas are coming together to shape the future of their communities and joining with other rural towns to accomplish community development goals. And, these local planning initiatives provide opportunities to link with larger, region-wide planning efforts.

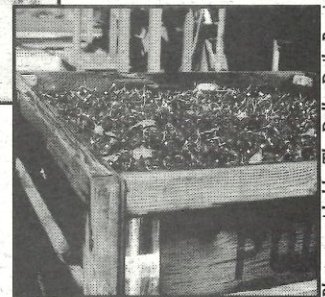
Region-wide planning is not a new concept. The Regional Strategies program established by former Gov. Neil Goldschmidt in the 1980s groups Oregon's counties into regions which determine key industries for economic development. Councils of Governments and Economic Development Districts have long handled specific tasks on a region-wide basis. Workforce Quality Committees also provide regional strategic plans. By connecting with existing regional planning efforts, small communities can maximize the success of their own planning.

A recent strategic planning effort in Wasco County (See "Wasco County Makes Local Plans in a Regional Context," page 3) illustrates how local strategies can tie into regional efforts. The Wasco Strategic Plan sets local goals that draw on the Oregon Benchmarks and that are tied directly to regional goals already established by the North Central Regional Strategies Board, and the region's Workforce Quality Committee, while reflecting the needs of individual communities in the county. Regional plans were used as a framework for shaping Wasco County's effort.

"Strategic planning should be a link between local needs and regional interests," says Mimi Maduro, manager of Oregon Opportunities, a workforce training project funded

*Photo provided by The Dalles Daily Reminder*

By drawing on region-wide planning efforts, the Wasco County Strategic Plan identified manufacturing, tourism and agriculture, along with environmental services, as key industries for strengthening their economic base.

*Photo provided by The Dalles Daily Reminder*

by the N.W. Area Foundation and the Oregon Lottery. "When a community begins strategic planning, it should review Workforce Quality Committee and Regional Strategy plans and learn how their community's needs fit into existing strategic plans. Regional planning organizations should also take a look at local strategic plans and seek to incorporate their priorities into regional strategies."

Maduro suggests that communities follow four simple steps to integrate region-wide planning with local planning efforts. "First, do your homework. Know if those plans reflect what your community needs," she explained. "Second, identify any gaps that exist and let the region-wide planning organization know what those gaps are. Next, reinforce and validate the commonalities. People need to know when they're on the right track. And last, establish a means of on-going communication - without meeting to death!"

Maduro points out that the 15 regional Workforce Quality Committees all do strategic plans and are now in the process of revising their plans for the next two years. "This is a perfect opportunity for small communities to state their concerns and see that their needs are incorporated into those strategic plans," she says.

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Rural Connections

Lynn Youngbar, RDI Executive Director

Last November, Gov. John Kitzhaber asked me to lead a working group to develop a rural strategy for his transition team. He acknowledged that Oregon had spent millions on urban projects like light rail and the convention center in Portland which should be balanced by more investment in rural areas, particularly if they are expected to share in the state's projected population growth.

This was quite an opportunity - helping a new governor think through the development of a rural strategy. I believe that a rural strategy for the state would truly help focus investment on priority needs and give policy-makers a framework for their decisions. So, I gathered up people from around the state to help me. We spent many long meetings debating the merits of one idea or another, and three strong themes emerged.

First: If we are serious about rural development, we have to invest ahead of any immediate promise of jobs. Private investment tends to follow public investment. The foundation of a community, like sewer, water, roads, parks, and schools needs to be in place for the private sector to be willing to make investments, particularly in smaller communities.

Second: To be effective in rural areas, we must decentralize the decision-making process concerning public investment. In the long run, we will get better results if rural people are trusted to decide what kind of future they want for themselves. Our Rural Strategy working group saw the Regional Strategies Boards as a promising decision-making model that could be revised to include additional responsibilities. And the interests of cities, special districts, tribes, and other community groups should be brought more directly into the planning process.

Third: We need some regulatory relief in rural areas. It's not that rural people don't want to preserve farm and forest land or want to abuse the

environment, but many regulations designed to serve more urban areas are not appropriate or much too costly for less populated regions. While there are no simple solutions to the regulatory situation, more attention needs to be paid to how well-meaning regulations designed to protect people and property in urban areas may have unexpected impacts in rural areas.

We came up with six major elements for Governor's

Kitzhaber's Rural Strategy:

- Push the decision-making for rural investments from all agencies closer to the community level while recognizing state and federal needs and priorities. We suggested using a modified version of the Regional Strategy Boards.
- Consider investments by all agencies concerned with rural areas to be part of a comprehensive rural development strategy.
- Invest in transportation in rural areas, recognizing it as a critical economic development and livability issue.
- Establish a flexible Rural Investment Fund in the Economic Development Department to make investments that improve the potential for the development of rural areas.
- Address regulatory issues that negatively impact rural areas and impede "good" development.
- Develop a comprehensive telecommunications policy that addresses the constraints and opportunities in rural areas.

Now that the legislative session is in full swing many of these concepts have been set aside as the Legislature focuses on the proposed \$15 million Rural Investment Fund. Even though budgets are tight, hopefully, the Rural Investment Fund will get some funding this session. Then, we in rural Oregon can get back to creating a new policy framework for how rural areas will be treated in the future. For a copy of the draft Rural Strategy working group proposal call RDI's office.



Rural Development Initiatives

Rural Development Initiatives, Inc., is a state-wide, non-profit corporation designed to help Oregon communities shape the development of their future economy by providing technical assistance, leadership training and access to resources.

RDI assists rural communities in the development of strategic plans for local economic development and then assists in the implementation of those plans. The organization also conducts downtown revitalization and tourism development assessments designed to capitalize on strategic planning.

Each year Rural Futures Forum offers community leaders an opportunity to improve leadership skills and learn new techniques in economic development.

RDI is working with over 30 communities throughout the state. It is supported by the Oregon Lottery, foundations and private donations.

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Intergrating plans offer advantages to small communities

(Continued from Page One)

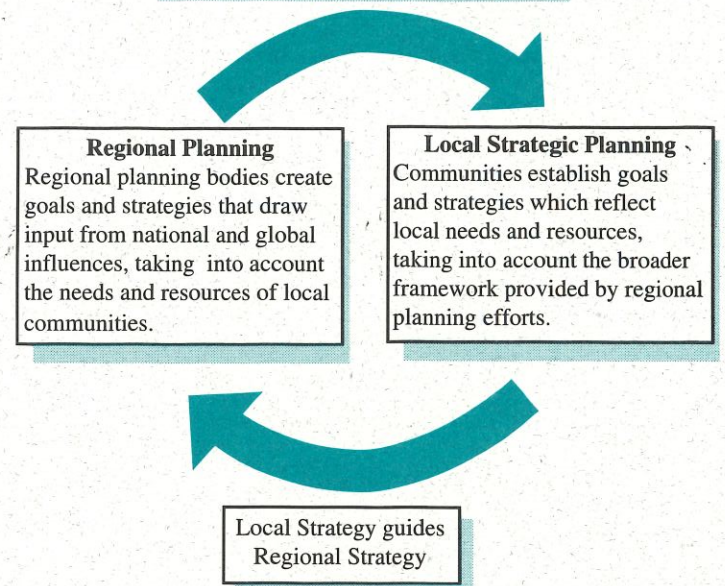
Integrating local needs with region-wide strategic plans offers several advantages to small communities, says Greg Satchell, economic development specialist with PGE. At his present job with the utility company, and in his former position with the Oregon Economic Development Department, Satchell sees how rural communities are effected by policies made at the state and federal levels. "The rural/urban split exists. So often decisions are made in Salem with little or no consideration as to how they will impact rural areas," he explains. "Efforts to protect Willamette Valley farmland from urban encroachment really don't apply to John Day or Burns. By coming together as a region, rural communities can create an environment where their interests are articulated, understood and considered."

Long a supporter of region-wide planning and cooperation, Denny Newell, director of the Greater Eastern Oregon Development Corporation, thinks rural communities need to get involved in regional planning at the beginning. "Often small communities lack the resources to tackle all their development needs, but by coming together as a region they gain sufficient numbers to accomplish their objectives," he explains. "Region-wide planning demands a broad point of view, but it also gives a small community the opportunity to promote its goals."

Jill Thorne, a member of Governor John Kitzhaber's transition team and one of the developers of his rural strategy, sees the need for coordinating local and regional planning and has worked to make it part of the Governor's plan. "If you 'own' the destiny of your community - what are you going to

do?" she says. "You're going to put in your blood, sweat and tears. Of course, the people who live in a community and who have a stake in its future will care more about the course their community will take."

Regional Strategy provides a framework for Local Strategic Planning.



Wasco County Makes Local Plans in a Regional Context

RDI has assisted rural communities all over Oregon in crafting strategic plans for community and economic development. Many communities have chosen to join with neighboring towns and unincorporated areas during this process, lending greater weight to their efforts and broadening their base of support. As more communities look at strategic planning as a means to chart future development, there is a growing interest in connecting local plans with regional planning done by Regional Strategies Boards and Workforce Quality Committees.

RDI's recent work in Wasco County illustrates the potential of county-level strategies to bridge the gap between local and regional efforts.

In 1992 six small towns in South Wasco County completed a strategic plan that led to successful efforts to attract investments in infrastructure and facilities that supported the tourism industry. Encouraged by their achievements, the Wasco County Economic Development Commission (WCEDC) initiated a county-wide strategic planning process that would

link the southern and northern communities, and tie their efforts to regional economic and workforce strategies. The county also wanted to develop benchmarks comparable to the State's as a means of measuring their performance. After receiving a grant from the U.S. Forest Service, Wasco County contracted with RDI to design and facilitate a process to create a county-wide plan.

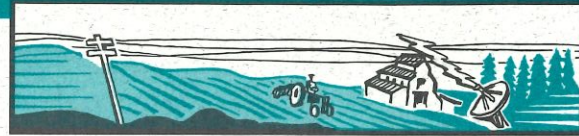
While retaining RDI's four building blocks of community development: business development, workforce development, infrastructure and quality of life, the plan focused on the three industries selected by their Regional Strategies Board: agriculture, environmental services, and tourism. The Wasco County Community Response Team (CRT) also chose general manufacturing as a sector that has potential for the creation of high wages jobs that can help them reach the benchmarks they established for per capita income and payroll per worker. For each of these sectors, strategies were developed that will help achieve the county benchmarks, as well as the regional

goals for economic development.

Working with representatives from the Regional Workforce Quality Committee, the CRT crafted similar goals and strategies for workforce development. Goals and strategies for quality of life and infrastructure buttressed the business and workforce strategies.

By incorporating the involvement of individuals from communities throughout the county with input of representatives from the Regional Strategies Board and Workforce Quality Committee, the CRT was able to develop a plan that reflected community needs and established connections to broader regional planning organizations. Because their strategies relate to and support the Oregon Benchmarks, the North Central Regional Economic Development Strategy and the Region 9 Workforce Quality Committee plan, Wasco County is well positioned to attract investments from state and regional programs which will augment local and county investments in their priority strategies.

Strategies in Action



Infrastructure

The residents of Lyons and Mehama will have cleaner water to drink once a new water treatment plant is completed. The \$1.4 million project was a priority for the North Santiam Canyon Economic Development Committee, (NSCEDC) which sought help from Linn County to gain money for the plant. The county requested the services of Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments and planner Pam Silbernagle. Aided by Silbernagle, the communities received a grant and loan from the Oregon Waste Water program. The loan will be repaid through a general obligation bond approved by voters last spring.

Improving infrastructure throughout the North Santiam Canyon was a priority goal of their strategic plan. The success of the water treatment facility is just one example of how communities along the canyon have used the plan to leverage funds for community improvements. A sewer feasibility study in Lyons is being updated with a \$25,000 grant, Gates received a \$10,000 grant to update their water master plan, Idanha is working on a water system improvement study with a \$70,000 grant, and preliminary approval was gained for \$100,000 needed for the Detroit sewer feasibility study. Other successes include Mill City's \$325,000 Old Town Development Project which will enable the city to construct biking/hiking trails, restore the railroad bridge and complete the construction of the Canyon Life museum.

"By using the strategic plan to gain support from Linn and Marion Counties, and to gain access to federal dollars, we've been able to make things happen," said Randa Korson, coordinator for NSCEDC.

Quality of Life

Homes in Garibaldi will be getting a face-lift through a block grant received by the city for housing rehabilitation. The city has received a Community Development Block Grant of \$300,000 through the State of Oregon

to offer loans to improve local low and moderate income housing.

Applicants can use the money for weatherization, remodeling and painting, and to upgrade water systems. As the loans are repaid, the fund will grow, enabling the city to make more loans to future applicants. The first loan was recently approved and several projects are out to bid. In the first round 27 homes will be rehabilitated.

Establishing a block grant for the improvement of low and moderate income housing was part of Garibaldi's strategic plan. CRT members attended workshops on possible funding sources, coordinated public hearings on the CDBG application and other grant sources and helped organize the loan board.

Community Action, Inc. manages the grant, acting on applications approved through a six-member loan board. The board, comprised of community members, will make sure applicants meet financial requirements and that the work is done by licensed contractors.

For more information about the housing rehabilitation fund contact Jenell Wiggins, director of housing and rehabilitation for Community Action, Inc., at 397-1675.

Workforce Development

Making the leap from high school to the business world has gotten a little easier for students in Burns thanks to a school-to-work transition program established this year through business classes at Burns High School.

Sixteen students participating in a business lab spend some time off-campus working for local businesses, like the print shop, a lumber yard, grocery store, local bank, hospital, City Hall and the OSU Extension Office. The students change jobs every nine

weeks, giving them the opportunity to experience a variety of work environments. While the students receive class credit for their work, they are not paid. The program is a joint effort between the high school and the Harney County Chamber of Commerce, with the business classes providing the training and the students, and the Chamber connecting them with local businesses.

The program gives students a greater awareness of the skills needed to establish a career and a chance to learn if a particular field is right for them, says Burns High Principal John Puskarich. "It shows the value of the skills they learn in high school and how those skills can be applied to the real world. The students need to know what an employer will



Burns High School students learn about the work world through their business class.

expect from them and how they can prepare for the career of their choice."

This spring the program will broaden to include the health care industry, giving students the opportunity to work with doctors, dentists and veterinarians. For more information about the program contact Puskarich at 573-2044.

Strategies in Action Update

Becoming part of the Southwest Oregon Community College District was a major element of Gold Beach's strategic plan. The community response team carried the proposal through a complex request process (See *Strategies In Action*, Summer, 1994) that culminated in a successful March 28 election on the issue.

Along the way, Gold Beach gained the support of the Brookings and Harbor Community Response Team, which made joining the district the first priority of their Workforce Development Strategy.

Although the annexation was (Please turn to Page Five)

Hisson's Talents Show in Many Ways

Getting elected is something Candace Hissong does well. She has served in the elected posts of Justice of the Peace for Douglas County and municipal judge for Glendale for eight years, winning her second term in a primary election last spring. And when there was an opening on the RDI board, she was elected by the 1992 Charter Class of Rural Futures Forum as their nominee for the position.

Once she was selected by RDI board members, Hissong brought a new element to the board's understanding of the organization and the services it offers to rural communities. "My job is to represent the rural communities that participate in RDI's programs," she explains. "The board thoroughly understands the concepts that created and direct RDI, but they haven't shared the experience of participating in the programs. They've been very receptive to my point of view, and I'd like to see them all go through RFF themselves. It's such a valuable program."

Hissong was involved in Glendale's strategic planning process from the

beginning. She was interviewed for the SWOT, which sparked her interest in what the community was going to be doing as it planned for the future. "When a community determines its own destiny, it becomes empowered to accept and make changes," she says. "It's an exciting process to be involved in, especially when you can see the results in your community and in your own life."

When she's not sitting behind the bench, or acting as the president of the Oregon Justice of the Peace Association, Hissong is at her home on Cow Creek, where she and her family have lived since 1960. She and her husband, Bob, recently celebrated their 23rd wedding anniversary. The couple has two children, Rob, 17, and on his way to becoming a nationally ranked archer, and DeAnne, 13, a pianist and animal lover.

Music plays an important role in

Candace Hissong, RDI Board Member

Background

- Glendale Municipal Court Judge and Justice of the Peace for Douglas County
- 1992 RFF Graduate and a member of the Glendale CRT
- Grew up in Douglas County and has lived on Cow Creek since 1960

Hobbies and Interests

- Avid singer
- Enjoys reading and sewing and baking yeast bread - "I don't use a bread maker - I get my hands right in there."

What the future holds

- "I see RDI growing and evolving along with the communities it serves. RDI will be established as the leader in the state for community development."



Candace's life as well. She sings "at every opportunity," and didn't hesitate to get into Shirley Temple garb to treat Cycle Oregon participants to "The Good Ship Lollipop" during their stop-over in Glendale last year.

Whether its upholding the law, running for office, tackling community problems, or singing her heart out, Candace Hissong doesn't hesitate to take up the challenge.

RDI Mill Site Program Enters Second Stage

A public-private partnership designed to turn empty timber mills into usable industrial aqu commercial property has now entered the second of three stages. The Mill Site Conversion Project assesses the potential for revitalizing seven abandoned mill sites in Oregon. The project partners include the Economic Development Administration, US Bancorp, PacificCorp, the Oregon Economic Development Department, Stoel Rives Boley Jones and Grey, and RDI.

The program was created to rehabilitate vacant mills into readily usable industrial sites on which new businesses may locate. Often, empty mill sites are the only developed industrial sites available to small, timber towns. The program is working with mill sites in Astoria, Merlin, Grants Pass, Myrtle Creek, Coquille, Philomath and Sweet Home.

The second phase of the program

includes identifying and evaluating the obstacles to reuse associated with each mill site. Each site requires wetland delineation and Level I environmental assessments, done in conjunction with the owners and government agencies.

Local action committees are working to identify and prioritize potential reuse options based on the communities' economic development goals, competitive position and available resources. The final phase may include Level II environmental assessments, site planning and identification of mitigation strategies.

Site profiles and the initial information gathered about each site will be used to help market the site to potential clients. In addition, OEDD has applied to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for a \$200,000 grant to create models on how to finance clean-up and redevelopment of the sites and other environmental issues.

Strategies in Action Update

(Continued from Page Four) approved by Curry County voters, approved by the State Board of Education and a bill supporting it passed the Oregon State Legislature, no funds were allocated by the Legislature to support the process. If the college district's tax levy was imposed upon Curry County, the State would be required to make up the \$1.3 million per year that would be taken from kindergarten through 12th grade education. However, the bill which authorized the annexation prohibits the taking of any funds from other educational institutions.

How and if the annexation effort will be funded remains to be worked out. Larry Minnich, CRT chair and Steve Kridelbaugh, SWOCC president, continue to explore funding options.

People & Places



A film crew from the McNeil/Lehrer News Hour was in Rainier on April 29, drawing on the community to illustrate a story on Dr. Robert Putnam and his theories on social capital. Putnam spoke in Portland, then came to Rainier with the film crew to visit civic organizations, tour the town and speak following a community barbecue. The crew spent the day interviewing various members of civic groups and capturing the spirit of the town.

Putnam, a noted Harvard professor and author, shared his views on civic engagement with the November session of Rural Futures Forum. Rainier was selected as an example of the application of Putnam's theories because of its community development successes. The spot should air sometime in May.

Barbara Gover, executive director of the Lake County Chamber of Commerce and chair of the Lakeview CRT, received the Governor's Tourism Award from Gov. John Kitzhaber at an April 4 luncheon. The award is presented to the individual or organization that embodies the spirit of cooperation and forward-thinking so necessary for the continued development of Oregon's visitor industry, Kitzhaber said.

Gover was praised for her approach to attracting tourism to Lake County, including the niche marketing of hang gliding opportunities available in the area. She was also cited for the creation of the first southwest Oregon driving tour, the Elderhostel program, the Lakeview-based State Welcome Center and her work with the Group Tour Task Force.

The eighth Cycle Oregon is getting ready to roll, and it will be taking towns in northeast Oregon by storm September 10-16. The annual cycling event brings over 2500 people, bicycles and equipment to small, rural communities along a challenging route.

This year the ride will begin in Athena and take participants through the Blue Mountains and the Wallawas

before heading to the Painted Hills. Riders will climb three mountain passes over 5,000 feet and get to see the rugged Hells Canyon, the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center, and the John Day Fossil Beds along the way.

The route includes a number of communities working with RDI. Meal stops or overnight visits will take place in Elgin, Joseph, Halfway, Baker City, Sumpter, Prairie City, Monument, Kimberly and Spray before the ride ends in Fossil.

Craig Smith, RDI Community Development Coordinator, again participated in planning the Cycle Oregon route and expects to be a part of the ride this year. Last year a number of RDI communities in southwest Oregon were selected as Cycle Oregon stops and earned money which could be invested in their community development efforts.

Linda Barhke, a 1992-93 Rural Futures Forum graduate, was named "Business Leader of 1994" by the Lebanon Chamber of Commerce. Barhke is the co-owner of Landstrom's Jewelers in Lebanon and the past president of the Lebanon Chamber of Commerce.

She was the first woman to ever receive the award, and one of the few small business owners to be honored. She earned her honor because of a broad array of Chamber activities.

Along with her civic activities, Landstrom's Jewelers recently moved to a new downtown location, doubling the size of their retail space.

A bit of Union County history will have a new look when renovations at the Union County Museum are completed. A grant from the U.S. Forest Service for \$13,500 was a goal of the Union Community Response Team. It will be used to renovate the exterior of the museum by repairing brickwork, putting in new sidewalks, changing the facade of the 110 year-old building and completing a new entry way. The museum is located in the original town bank, built in 1884, and an adjoining building that used to be a grocery store.

A grant from Union County's room tax fund will provide \$5,000 toward new displays on natural history and the role of rivers and fisheries of the Grande Ronde in the development of the county. A \$3,900 grant from the Northeast Oregon Alliance Regional Strategies will be used for a new heating and air conditioning system which will allow the museum to remain open year-round. Previously, the museum closed in mid-October and did not reopen until mid-May.

For more information about the museum renovation effort contact Leonard Almquist, Union City Manager, at 562-5197.

The third annual Elgin River Festival will be held June 17-18 in Elgin. The festival will feature fly tying, square dancing in the street, model boat races and a Ride, Raft, Run race on the Grande Ronde. There will be food and craft booths, art exhibits, puppetry, poetry readings and stakeholder round table discussions of river issues.

Activities will center around the Clarence Witty Memorial Park and the Elgin Community Center. For information call the Elgin Recorder and Chamber of Commerce office at 437-1971.

The Rural Futures Forum team from Garibaldi did its homework. As part of a practicum assignment during this year's RFF, the Garibaldi Community Response Team (CRT) organized a community meeting to update the public on the economic progress being made by the CRT and got a whopping response. Lured by a potluck, over 100 people turned out to hear about the strategic plan and its advancement.

The fact that the meeting was held during one of the quieter times of the year for the coastal community, and that it was well promoted and inclusive of all factions of the community, helped ensure a good turn out, as well as the good food. Best of all, many of those who attended indicated a willingness to help with implementation of their strategic plan.

Rural Investment Fund Gathers Support

When the Oregon State Senate considers the creation of the Rural Investment Fund, they will have the testimony of a number of rural residents to reflect on as they make their decision. Armed with their strategic plans and an impressive number of community development projects, rural residents joined county and city officials in testifying before the Senate Committee on Trade and Economic Development in Salem on April 11.

Speaking to the committee were Rural Futures Forum graduates Ken Wells, Depoe Bay; Christopher Shonnard, Philomath; and Gary Jurden, Mill City. Max White represented the Sweet Home Economic Development Group and Melinda Anderson represented the South Umpqua Valley Economic Development committee.

Supporting legislation designed to assist rural communities is a necessary

effort, said Jurden, a member of the North Santiam Canyon Economic Development Committee. Direct testimony, letters and telephone calls to representatives all have a place in the political process. "We can't afford to miss any opportunity," he said. "There will always be projects where you need a few more dollars, or a little seed money, to get it done."

Making urban legislators aware of the needs of rural communities was one reason Wells made the trip to Salem. "We have the same needs as Portland or Salem for housing, street improvements and parks, but we don't have the same resources," he said. "Because rural communities lack access to state-wide media, talking to legislators directly is one way to get their attention."

Tourist towns like Depoe Bay

depend on visitors from metro areas who have high expectations when it comes to amenities and public services, he said. But, the low-wage jobs created by the tourism industry leaves communities few options for collecting taxes to complete improvement projects. "We get hit hard when it comes to preparing feasibility reports or studies. Having a flexible source of funds, like the Rural Investment Fund, could be a help to us. It's important for legislators from metro areas to know that."

The Rural Investment Fund, or Senate Bill 697 has passed out of the Trade and Economic Development Committee and now moves on for additional consideration by the Ways and Means Committee before reaching the full Senate. For more information about the Rural Investment Fund contact the RDI office.

Hunter Finds Common Bond with Communities

When Treva Hunter, a community development coordinator for RDI, sits down with a Community Response Team, she knows they all share many common bonds: involvement in civic affairs, a focus on family and school activities, and a strong concern about issues facing the rural communities where they all live.

"The communities RDI works with in Southwest Oregon are very much like where I live. Because I'm a rural planner from rural Oregon, I know the region and the ins and outs of the planning process," she explains.

Hunter has lived in her home on 40 acres in Tenmile, a small community 20 miles west of Roseburg, for 22 years. She is a member of the school board and the fire department board. As a single mom, her life revolves around work, four cats, two dogs, and her son, Ryan, a senior at Douglas High, west of Winston, where he is an "A" student and outstanding athlete. As a fan of her son's athletic teams, Hunter had previously visited most of the communities where she now works. "I feel like I know the communities because I've been there so often for baseball, basketball or football games," Treva said. "I see lots of familiar faces when a community comes together for the strategic planning process, although they've usually been on the opposing

team's side of the bleachers!"

Before Hunter began working for RDI in March of 1994, she spent eight years as the senior planner for Umpqua Regional Council of Governments, and ten years as an adult basic education teacher for Umpqua Community College. Her combination of planning skills and "people" skills, make working with Community Response Teams the most enjoyable part of her job.

"I'm certainly not shy about being in front of a group," said Hunter. "Most of my task is to impart knowledge and guide the group through the strategic planning process. The best part is that it combines my experience as a planner with my skills as an educator. There aren't many jobs where you can utilize the varying aspects of your career."

Hunter is especially proud of being a second-generation Italian. Her grandparents came from northern Italy, bringing their strong sense of family,

Treva Hunter, RDI Community Development Coordinator Background:

- Received a bachelor's degree in political science from U.C. Berkeley before moving to Tenmile, Oregon, 22 years ago.
- Worked as a planner and educator before joining RDI in March, 1994.

Hobbies:

- Weaving, hiking, flower gardening and being a cheering section for her son, Ryan.

Current pre-occupation:

- Helping Ryan pick through athletic scholarship offers from assorted colleges around the country.



the Italian language and choice family recipes with them. "I love to cook - manicotti, ravioli, traditional dishes," Treva said. "Even my name comes from the town where my grandparents lived, Treviso, a small town north of Venice." Having made a trip to Italy as a college student, she hopes to make a return trip with her son someday.

Today, Hunter confines her travels to the roads and highways of Southwest Oregon. "I get some nice 'alone' time when I'm driving to the communities I work with. I just pop in a book on tape and I'm off," she said.



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Business Assistance Teams Take Flight

Thriving businesses are at the heart of any healthy community and working to expand and retain those businesses is at the heart of a Business Assistance Team (BAT) program currently underway through Rural Development Initiatives (RDI).

The program is funded by a grant from the USDA Rural Economic Community Development Department and contributions from Portland General Electric, and First Interstate Bank.

The idea that one of the best ways to preserve and grow jobs in a community is by supporting growing businesses that are already there, has become an element of many strategic plans. However, guiding a business through its growing pains is a complex process. The RDI program is designed to give local business assistance teams the skills they require to assess the needs of a growing business and knowledge of what resources are available to aid them.

To establish the new program, RDI community development coordinator Craig Smith researched business retention and expansion programs in several communities, identifying the critical success factors for a productive BAT (start-up, organizational, and publicity issues), and the most successful techniques for assisting businesses. He and Mary Bosch, RDI strategic planner, put together a year-long program that will help communities establish a BAT. The program will help recruit members for the local team, provide assistance for marketing the concept to local businesses, conduct

workshops on how to assess a business's needs, and offer information on how to gain access to local, state and federal programs designed to assist business.

To launch the program RDI is working with four communities: Molalla, Reedsport, Burns/Hines and the North Santiam Canyon. Each community has a strategic plan that made the establishment of a BAT one of their priorities. CRT members on the BAT include bankers, accountants, attorneys, respected business owners, and members of economic development organizations and small business development centers.

"Team members should be well-respected in the community, have good credibility and be able to communicate," explains Bosch. "We've found that team members take their participation very seriously and work hard to ensure that they give accurate information to businesses seeking their services."

The first training session for new BATs was held Feb. 27. The workshop focused on developing skills for assessing every aspect of a business, the basics of business planning and finance, available resources and first-hand accounts from business owners who worked with a state program to improve their businesses.

"Assessing the true problem a business faces has to be handled with sensitivity and confidentiality," Smith says. "The workshop offered participants a chance to explore case studies and talk to business owners who have successfully used a similar program.

There was a lot of role playing and note taking."

Once a team has completed the training, a designated local coordinator will help the team market the BAT concept. "They'll be meeting with civic and business organizations, and using local media, but our primary method of contact will be word of mouth," Bosch said. "As more businesses take advantage of the BATs, they will make referrals and the program will continue to grow.

"I do economic development work throughout the country, and I think this is an innovative concept for rural communities. Most small communities look to recruitment when it comes to expanding their economies, and forget that retention and start-ups are critical. Studies have shown that three-fourths of job growth comes from existing business. Establishing a program that tries to meet the need of established businesses is an important element in rural development."

Once the original four communities have completed the first six months of the program and are working with their initial clients, up to four new communities will be selected for the second round of the program. Additional services are available to successful teams through RDI's technical assistance provider fund, which supplies up to \$12,000 per community for technical expertise to individual businesses.